



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**North Carolina farmers: Time is running out to complete
2017 Census of Agriculture**
NASS conducting phone and in-person follow-up

RALEIGH, N.C. – May 3, 2018 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is reminding North Carolina farmers the window is closing on the opportunity to participate in the 2017 Census of Agriculture. To date, NASS has received more than 1.5 million completed questionnaires, 37,000 of which are from North Carolina. But the national and North Carolina return rate is currently lower than at this point in the 2012 Census. NASS is encouraging North Carolina producers who have not returned their completed Census questionnaires to do so as soon as possible to avoid phone and in-person follow-up.

“The North Carolina NASS Field Office really appreciates the responses from farmers thus far, but it is important that others who received a Census questionnaire also respond to ensure the impact of North Carolina agriculture to the state, nation and the world is counted,” said North Carolina State Statistician Dee Webb.

“If you produced and sold \$1,000 or more of agricultural product in 2017, or normally would have produced and sold that much, we need to hear from you,” said Webb. “If you’re a landowner who leases your land to a producer, we need to hear from you. If you received a Census but do not fit this definition of a farm, we still need to hear from you; just write your status on the form, and send it back.”

Webb noted that NASS is just beginning to follow up with producers who have not yet completed the Census questionnaire.

“The follow-up contacts will give each person the opportunity to ask questions. For those not familiar with the Census of Agriculture it allows for the opportunity to learn about value of the data and impact to our great state,” said Webb. “If there are farmers who were waiting until they have gathered their tax documents before completing the Census; having that information handy will certainly make filling out the questionnaire faster and easier.”

The Census of Agriculture is the only comprehensive source of agriculture data for every state and county in the nation. Census data are used by policymakers, trade associations, researchers, agribusinesses, educators, and many others. The information helps inform decisions on farm policy, rural

development, and new farm technologies. It also aids in the creation and funding of loans and insurance programs and other forms of assistance, as well as in the cultivation of the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

The Census differs from other NASS surveys. It provides important demographic information and data on certain commodities, such as vegetables, horses and Christmas trees to name a few, that would not otherwise be available. Revisions to the questionnaire in 2017 include new queries about military veteran status, decision-making on the farm, and food marketing practices.

“By completing your Census, you are ensuring your voice is being added to the conversation about the state of agriculture nationally and locally,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “The Census information collected from producers is important, as it is used by policy makers at the local, state and federal levels, and by researchers, agribusinesses, trade associations and farmers in helping make informed decisions with verifiable data.”

North Carolina producers can respond to the 2017 Census of Agriculture online at www.agcounts.usda.gov or by mail. The same law, Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113, that requires response also requires NASS to keep all information confidential, to use the data only for statistical purposes, and to only publish in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any individual producer or farm operation. NASS will release Census results in February 2019.

For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture or for assistance with the questionnaire, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

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